

MFIP Time Limits and Extensions by County

This information brief provides data on the number of people reaching the 60-month time limit for receiving welfare assistance and information on the number and circumstances of extensions granted to some of those reaching the 60-month time limit.

The Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) provides cash and food assistance to low-income families, and serves between 33,000 and 35,000 families each month.¹ Federal and state law provides that MFIP cash benefits generally can be paid to a family only for 60 months, although some cases qualify for extensions. Families in Minnesota first began reaching the time limit in July 2002.² Through August 2002, 1,554 Minnesota families had reached the time limit; 996 are still receiving assistance, 907 through extensions.³

The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) regularly prepares county-level data on the number of MFIP cases at risk of reaching the 60-month time limit in coming months and on the number of cases currently receiving extensions. The following series of maps summarizes

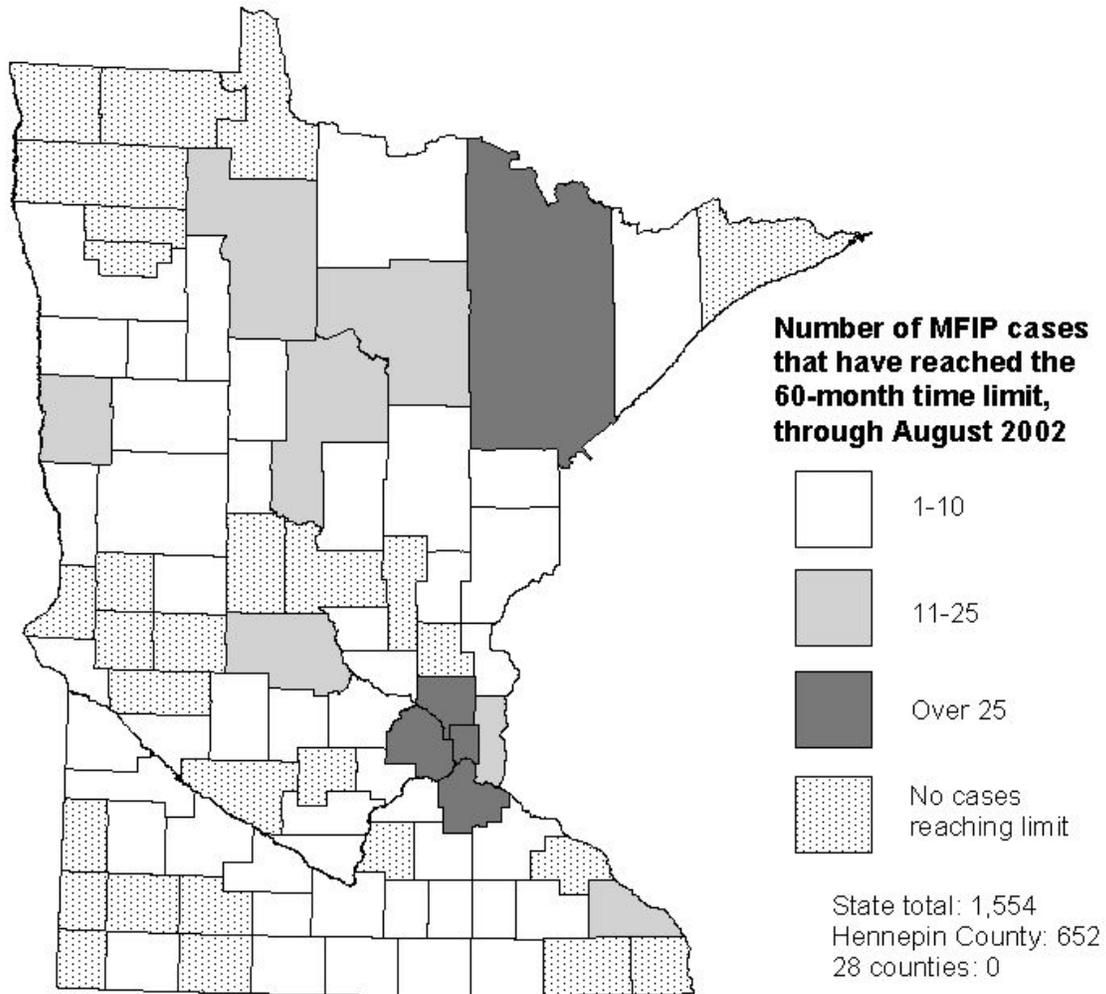
¹ Caseload counts from MFIP Monthly Reports, January 2001 to February 2002, as posted on the DHS web site (www.dhs.state.mn.us/ECS/REPORTS/default.htm#MFIP%20Monthly%20Report).

² MFIP is Minnesota's assistance program funded primarily through its federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant. Minnesota implemented the MFIP program in July 1997, in response to federal welfare reform that created TANF as the replacement for Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). Some other states implemented their TANF programs earlier. As a result, 88 families who received benefits in another state before July 1997 and have since moved to Minnesota have reached the time limit before July 2002.

³ Of the remaining cases, 51 are child-only and not subject to the time limit, 33 are food-only, and five are suspended.

data prepared in September 2002, by county, on the number of cases at risk of reaching the time limit by May 2003,⁴ and on cases receiving extensions as of September 2002.

Cases Reaching or At Risk of Reaching the Time Limit



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⁴ The number of cases at risk of reaching the time limit by May 2003 was calculated based on the number of months of MFIP benefits received by each active case through August 2002. Each case was continued into the future, assuming that the family would continue to receive benefits until reaching the limit. For example, cases with 59 months of benefits through August 2002 were assumed to be at risk of reaching the 60-month time limit in September 2002. These estimates are likely to overstate the number of cases that actually reach the time limit, as some cases will leave MFIP for other reasons before reaching the 60-month limit.

Through August 2002, 1,554 MFIP cases reached the 60-month time limit. In Hennepin County, 652 cases reached the limit, the most of any county in the state. In 28 counties, no cases reached the limit. Most counties had fewer than ten cases reach the limit.

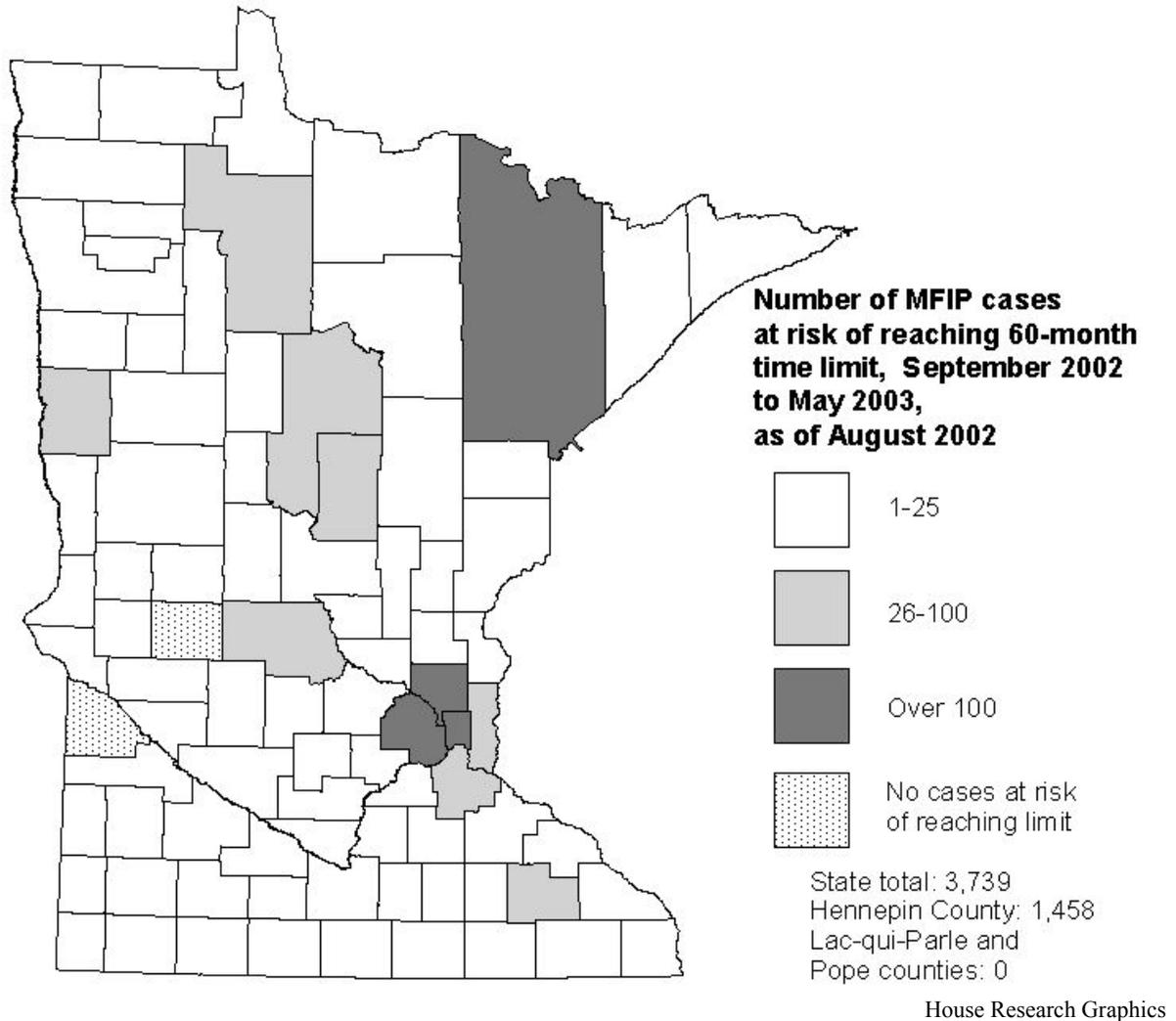
The counties with the largest number of cases reaching the limit were:

- in the Twin Cities metro area
 - Anoka—40 cases
 - Dakota—36 cases
 - Hennepin—652 cases
 - Ramsey—504 cases
- St. Louis County (includes city of Duluth)—84 cases

Counties with 11 to 25 cases projected to reach the limit are:

- in the Twin Cities metro (Washington—18 cases)
- regional centers
 - Beltrami (Bemidji)—18 cases
 - Clay (Moorhead)—17 cases
 - Itasca (Grand Rapids)—12 cases
 - Stearns (St. Cloud)—14 cases
- in other nonmetro counties
 - Cass—14 cases

Additional MFIP Cases At Risk of Reaching the 60-Month Time Limit by May 2003



An additional 3,739 MFIP cases are at risk of reaching the 60-month time limit on benefits between September 2002 and May 2003, for a potential total of 5,293 cases reaching the limit. The actual number that reaches the limit will depend on whether all cases at risk continue to receive benefits in the months following August 2002. As context, DHS forecasts that a total of 3,300 families will reach the limit during fiscal year 2003, reflecting the expectation that some families will leave MFIP due to increased earnings, moving out of state, or other changed circumstances. Hennepin County has 1,458 cases at risk of reaching the limit, the most of any county in the state. Two counties, Lac-qui-Parle and Pope, do not have any cases at risk of reaching the limit. Most counties have fewer than 25 cases with the potential of reaching the limit.

The counties with the largest number of cases approaching the limit in September 2002 to May 2003 are:

- in the Twin Cities metro area
 - Anoka—120 cases
 - Hennepin—1,458 cases
 - Ramsey—974 cases
- St. Louis County (includes city of Duluth)—236 cases

Other counties with more than 25 cases projected to reach the limit are:

- in the Twin Cities metro
 - Dakota—93 cases
 - Washington—66 cases
- regional centers
 - Beltrami (Bemidji)—53 cases
 - Clay (Moorhead)—42 cases
 - Crow Wing (Brainerd)—34 cases
 - Olmsted (Rochester)—43 cases
 - Stearns (St. Cloud)—55 cases
- in other nonmetro counties
 - Cass—42 cases

Cases Qualifying for Extensions

Counties are required to extend the 60-month time limit for families who meet certain criteria, and who were not subject to program sanctions in their 60th month of receiving benefits.⁵ Families who reach the time limit and who meet the following criteria are eligible for an extension. In September 2002, 907 families were receiving extensions; an additional 33 families qualified for an extension but received food benefits only. Those qualifying for extensions fall into the following categories:

- Ill or incapacitated (376 extensions)
- Hard-to-employ (400 extensions)
- Employed participants (124 extensions)

The DHS data also listed 40 extensions in a category called “other.” These include nine cases that were extended due to an appeal, 18 cases that used a previously “banked” month in order to remain eligible for benefits, one case in which the reason for the extension was not reported, and 12 cases that were extended in error.

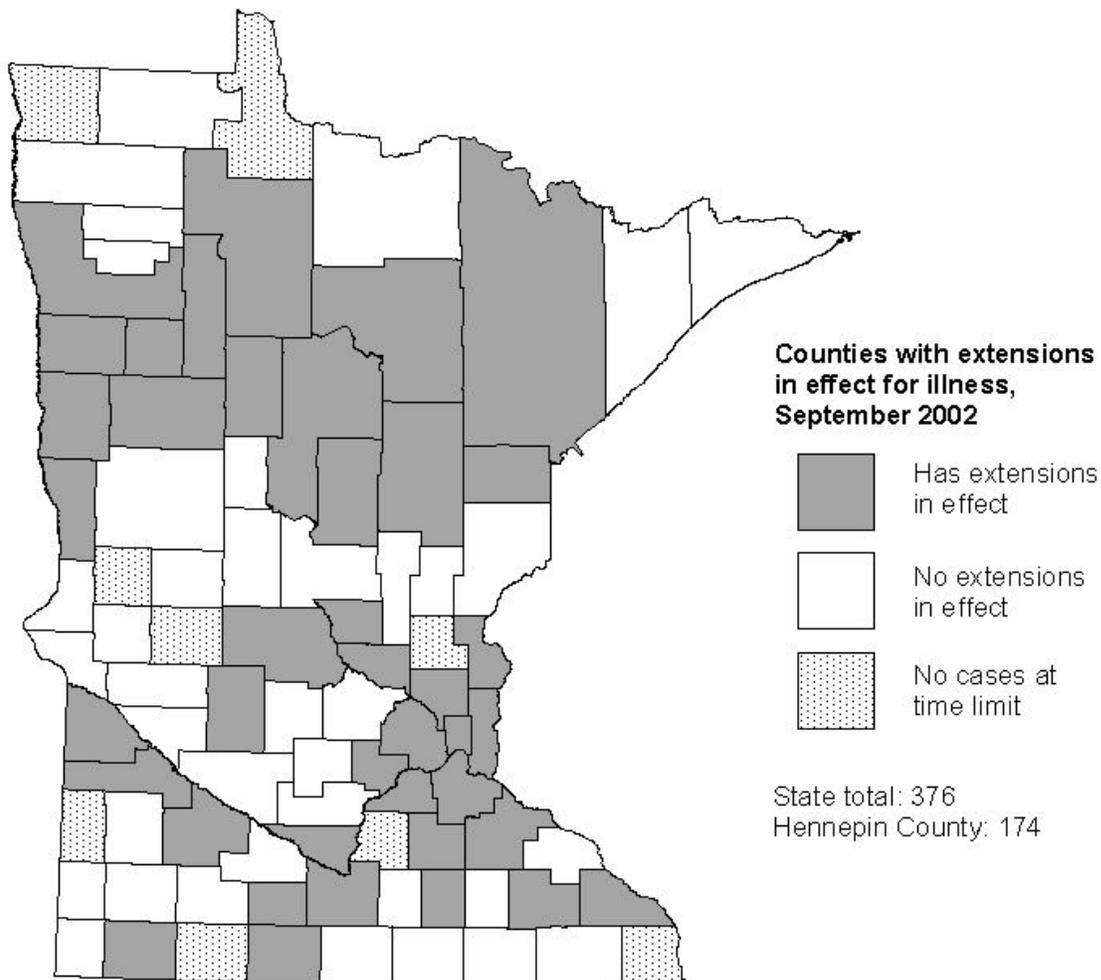
⁵ One of the features of MFIP is the sanctioning of families who do not comply with program requirements. Sanctions include vendor-payment of the family’s shelter and utility costs and a percentage reduction in the grant amount remaining. Families receiving extensions can be disqualified if they are subjected to a sanction while in extension status.

Ill or Incapacitated Extensions

Throughout Minnesota 376 families have qualified for extensions due to being ill or incapacitated. This group includes participants who:

- are ill or incapacitated;
- are needed in the home to care for a household member who is ill or incapacitated; or
- have a household member who meets certain disability or medical criteria.

Counties Granting Extensions for Illness, September 2002



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Forty counties had families with extensions due to illness reasons in September 2002. Hennepin County had the most extensions at 174.

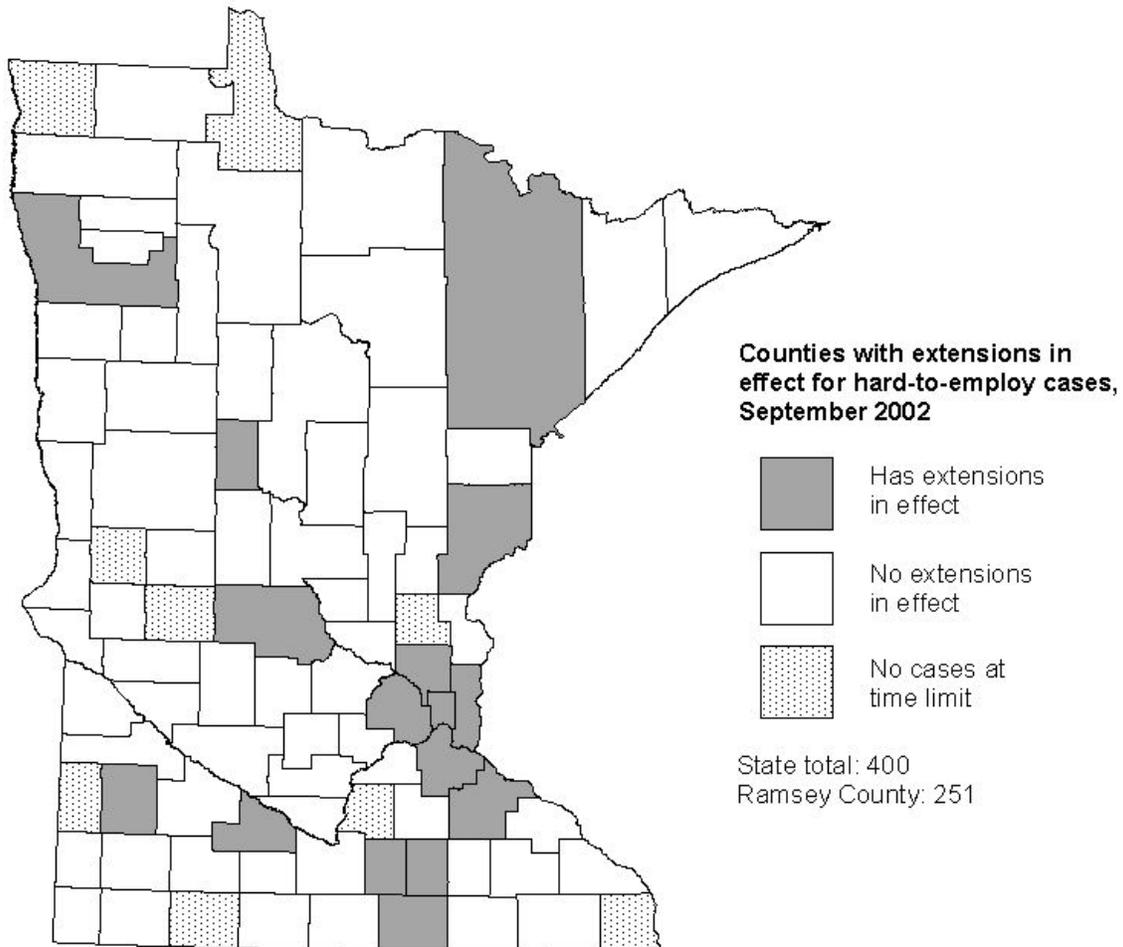
Hard-to-employ Extensions

The hard-to-employ category includes participants who:

- are diagnosed as having mental retardation or mental illness, and that condition prevents the person from obtaining or retaining unsubsidized employment;
- are considered unemployable, or are employable but employability is limited due to a low IQ;
- have a learning disability; or
- are victims of family violence and are participating in an alternative employment plan.⁶

As of September 2002, 400 families were receiving extensions under the hard-to-employ category. Ramsey County allowed the most hard-to-employ extensions (251).

Counties Granting Extensions for Hard-to-Employ Cases, September 2002



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⁶ The victims of family violence extension category took effect July 2002; data is not yet available on the number of families qualifying for an extension under this criterion.

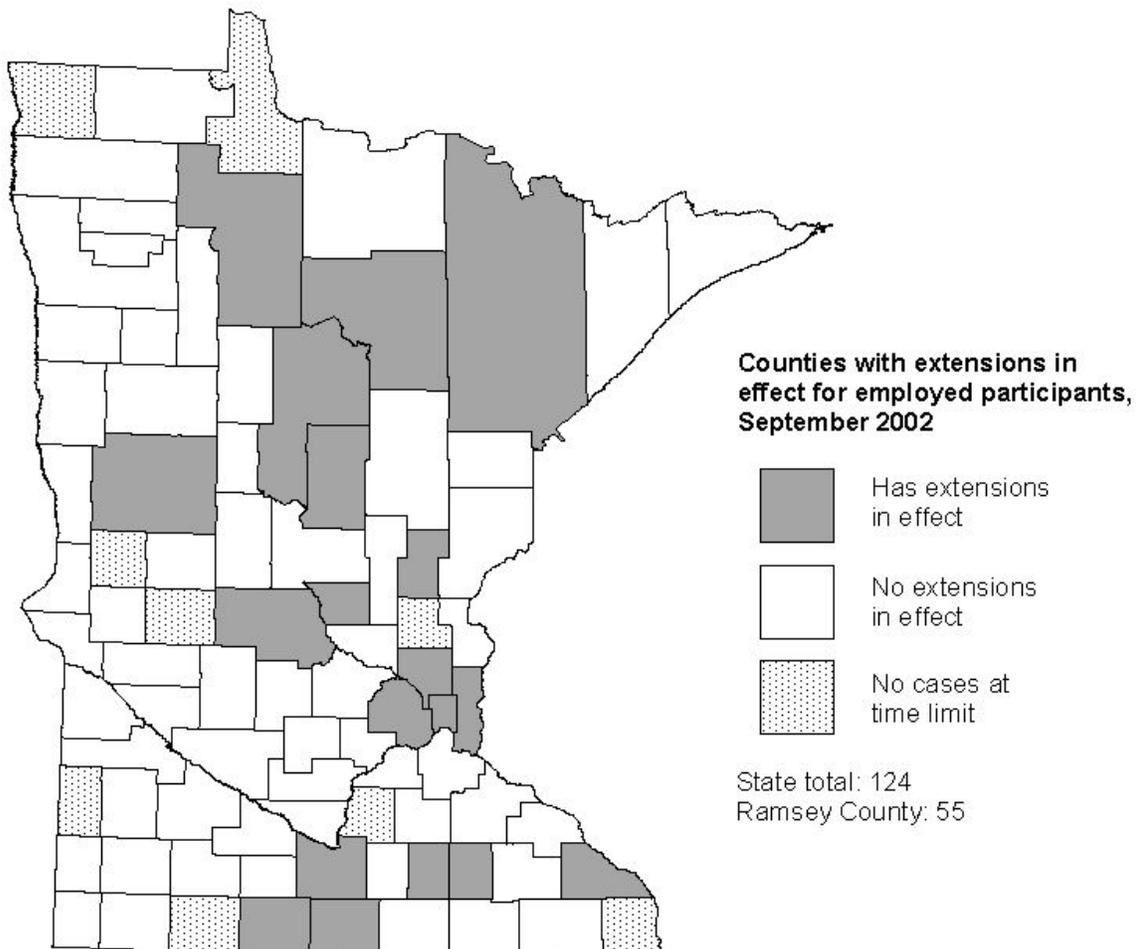
Employed Participants Extensions

In September 2002, 124 families who were employed qualified for extensions. To qualify, these families must:

- Be participating in work activities for at least 30 hours per week, with at least 25 hours spent in employment (one-parent families)
- Be participating in work activities for at least 55 hours per week, with at least 45 hours spent in employment (two-parent families)
- Be working fewer than the number of hours required, but unable to work more hours due to an illness or disability.

To qualify for this extension, the parent in a one-parent family or both parents in a two-parent family must not have been sanctioned for at least 10 out of the 12 months before reaching the 60-month time limit, including the 60th month. This extension expires on June 30, 2004.

Counties Granting Extensions for Employed Participants, September 2002



Nineteen counties allowed a total of 124 extensions to employed parents in September 2002. Ramsey County granted the most extensions with 55.

For more information on extensions from the 60-month time limit, see the House Research information brief *The 60-Month Time Limit on TANF Assistance*, January 2002, and the web publication *Updates to the 60-Month Time Limit*. Also see the health and human services area of our web site, www.house.mn/hrd/issinfo/hlt_hum.htm.

More detailed analysis of the welfare caseload, including cases at risk of reaching the time limit, is available from Don Hirasuna, 651 296-8038.